



# SEA KAYAK CLUB

Sea Kayaking in the Polar Regions with *Sea Spirit*

## Preparation Notes

### *What* to expect

In **Sea Kayak Club** you can expect a unique and world-class paddling experience. The polar regions offer some of the most interesting, demanding and rewarding sea kayaking opportunities in the world. Our seasoned expedition team and professional sea kayak guides are at your service to deliver the adventure of a lifetime. As with any genuine adventure, what you get out of the program will depend partly on what you bring and put into it. Please read on to discover what you can expect from us and what we will expect from you.

### **Small group experience:**

Sea Kayak Club is limited to 8 participants per voyage in the Arctic and 16 participants per voyage in Antarctica. You will get to know your kayak guides and your fellow kayakers well. Your safety and enjoyment will be enhanced by teamwork and mutual respect.

### **Uncompromised safety:**

On the water you will be part of a guided paddling group in our exceptionally stable double sea kayaks. You will have one or more qualified sea kayak guides leading your group and helping you in and out of the kayaks at all times. The guide to kayaker ratio will always be at least one to eight (1:8). In addition, there will always be a dedicated safety Zodiac (rescue boat) accompanying your paddling group on the water. Safety gear is carried in the Zodiac to ensure a speedy recovery in the unlikely event that a kayak capsizes. Your kayak guides will give a comprehensive Sea Kayak Club orientation before your first paddle and safety briefings throughout the voyage.

### **Quality equipment:**

We provide all the specialized sea kayaking equipment and paddling gear you will need to have a safe and enjoyable time in the polar environment. Our Prijon double sea kayaks are extremely tough and stable. We also provide high-quality Kokatat paddling suits and PFDs, as well as other gear (more below). All of our kayaks and gear are well organized and maintained in excellent condition. We carry enough of all sizes to ensure that everyone feels safe and comfortable in our gear. You will be encouraged to help us care for and clean the gear you use.

### **A variety of conditions:**

Paddling conditions will vary. Calm conditions are likely to exist in some of the protected bays and fjords we visit. However, it is also possible to encounter strong winds and seas with moderate chop and swell. Water and air temperatures will both be around 0°C (32°F). Kayaking will not be initiated if conditions seem to pose an unacceptable risk, but in the polar regions there is always the possibility of rough weather and seas developing suddenly without warning.



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## **A real workout:**

Paddling times and distances will vary between voyages and between excursions. On any given kayaking session you will be on the water for between one and three hours and you may paddle as much as six nautical miles (10 kilometers). Our purpose will not be to paddle a marathon, but the more we paddle the more we will see and experience. Your kayak guides will discuss anticipated times and distances prior to each paddling excursion. However, your kayak adventures may end up being unscripted and spontaneous, depending on ice, weather and wildlife.

## **Choices:**

Sea kayaking is offered at the same time as other activities, such as Zodiac cruising and shore landings. Occasionally kayaking can be combined with these activities; other times you will have a choice to make. On excursions where it is offered, kayaking is optional to each participant individually. Your kayak guides will hold pre-excursion meetings to help you choose your activity, with the aim that over the course of the voyage you will achieve your preferred balance of shore landings, Zodiac cruises and kayaking sessions.

## **Trustworthy paddling companions:**

All participants in Sea Kayak Club are required to have appropriate fitness, good health and previous kayaking experience. Participants are also expected to demonstrate team spirit and an attitude of cooperation. This is for the safety and enjoyment of everyone in the group. For more information please see our *Sea Kayak Club Terms and Conditions*.

## *How to prepare*

Please read on to discover how you can best prepare for a safe and satisfying adventure with us.

## **Your mind:**

Perhaps the most important preparation you can make is to prepare your mind with the right attitude. Although there will be many safeguards in place, you will nevertheless be embarking on a *real adventure*. Participation in Sea Kayak Club will often be relaxing and carefree; at other times it may be challenging and even stressful. It will always require your full engagement, concentration, cooperation and flexibility. Each excursion will be different and we must all do our best to make the most of every situation. Although we have tried here to provide you with appropriate expectations, you are asked to put aside any preconceptions you may have.

## **Your skills:**

The best way to prepare yourself for Sea Kayak Club is to practice your kayaking skills beforehand. All participants are expected to have some experience in a sea kayak and basic paddling skills. The more comfortable and confident you are in a kayak, the more you will enjoy your time with us.



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If you have no kayaking experience at the time of your booking, you will need to acquire some before you join the ship. This is important not only for the safety of yourself and the group, but also for your enjoyment. We recommend, regardless of your previous experience, that you rent a sea kayak or, better yet, take sea kayaking lessons for at least two days before you join us. Even if you only have access to a lake, be sure to go out in a proper sea kayak (as opposed to a “sit-on-top” kayak or canoe) with a spray skirt and preferably a foot-controlled rudder system for steering. Practice basic paddle strokes and make sure you can perform an emergency “wet exit” if the need arises. Practicing self-rescue techniques will boost your confidence, though we do not require you to have these skills. You do not need to know how to perform an Eskimo roll.

### **Your body:**

Sea Kayak Club members are expected to have appropriate fitness and good health. As a practical benchmark for fitness, you should have the strength and agility to lunge yourself out of a pool without the use of a ladder. You must also be able to swim. Acquire fitness, experience, and skills—and have fun—all at the same time by going out in a sea kayak as much you can before joining us!

### *What* we provide

You will be pleasantly surprised by the quality and condition of our gear as compared to other sea kayak programs and rental outfitters you may have experienced.

### **Sea kayaks:**

On board *Sea Spirit* we have Prijon Excursion EVO double sea kayaks with rudder steering. These tough, stable kayaks are ideal for occasional rough conditions and paddling through brush ice. Please note that the maximum hip width accommodated by our kayaks is 45 cm (17¾ in) and the recommended paddler weight range of these kayaks is 70 to 110 kg (154 to 242 lbs). Our rugged Prijon Bora paddles are fixed at 225 cm, the ideal length for our relatively wide kayaks.

### **Paddling gear:**

You will also be outfitted with top-quality, extreme-weather kayaking gear, including a Kokatat paddling suit (unisex sizes: S-XXL), spray skirt, paddling-specific PFD (life jacket), unisex paddling booties (EU sizes 39-48, equivalent to US men’s sizes 6-14) and neoprene pogies.

### *How* to pack

You will need to bring the clothes that you will wear under your provided paddling suit. Appropriate inner layers for kayaking can also be used underneath your rain pants and parka while on deck, in the Zodiacs or on shore. So you do not necessarily need to pack twice the gear to go kayaking.



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### **Dressing for the conditions:**

What you wear inside your paddling suit will depend on the conditions, which can vary substantially between excursions. Air temperatures will normally range between -5°C (23 °F) and +10°C (50°F). Cloud cover, wind and precipitation can dramatically affect how it feels outside. On cloudy, breezy days with freezing rain or snow, it can feel brutally cold. But remember also that you will be engaged in a strenuous physical activity in a paddling suit that uses trapped air as insulation. So the possibility of overheating and becoming wet (and then cold) from perspiration must also be considered. The layering principle should be observed, but keep in mind it will not be possible to add or remove layers while on the water inside your paddling suit.

### **Clothing:**

Nylon, polyester (fleece), polypropylene and merino wool are the preferred fabrics for paddling. Cotton is not appropriate due to poor heat retention when damp (e.g., from perspiration). Your base (regulation) layer should be moisture-wicking thermal long underwear (lightweight for bottoms, medium-weight for top). Your insulating layer should be comfortable non-cotton trousers/pants and a medium-weight, non-bulky, long sleeve fleece top, preferably without a hood. The provided paddling suit will be your waterproof layer. Air trapped inside the suit will provide additional insulation.

### **For your head:**

A fleece or tight knit wool hat (beanie or tuque) is essential. Bring an extra in case one gets wet. In addition, a neck tube or balaclava will protect your face and neck against the cold polar winds. A wide-brimmed hat or cap is advisable for UV protection on sunny days. Donning and removing your headwear will be your primary method of thermoregulation while kayaking.

### **For your feet:**

Your feet will be completely dry in your paddling suit and special socks are usually not necessary. However, thick socks (preferably wool or fleece) are recommended if your feet are prone to cold.

### **For your hands:**

The purpose of our neoprene pogies (paddling mittens) is to provide protection from the elements for your hands without compromising your grip on the paddle shaft. In very cold and/or windy conditions you may be more comfortable wearing fleece or wool glove liners inside your pogies. You should bring an extra pair of these in case your first pair gets wet. Durable dishwashing gloves with a tactile grip also make good liners that have the benefit of keeping your hands dry.

### **For your eyes and skin:**

UV (ultra-violet light) protection is essential in the polar regions, even on cloudy days. Bring polarized sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat or cap, plenty of waterproof sunscreen and lip balm.